



Palmerton Zinc Pile Superfund Site Natural Resource Damage Assessment

Recreational Fishing Losses

The Palmerton Zinc Pile (Site) is the site of a former zinc smelting operation. For 90 years, the Palmerton, PA facility emitted large quantities of metals that were deposited in the Palmerton area including Blue Mountain and nearby watersheds. While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continues clean-up efforts, Federal and State trustee agencies are conducting a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). Monies and land recovered through the NRDA process will be used to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of the injured public resources in order to compensate the public for lost services provided by those resources.

Since 1981 and enactment of CERCLA, lower Aquashicola Creek was not stocked with trout due to the high levels of metals in sediment and water, and associated negative impacts on aquatic life. This Fact Sheet describes the rationale for the recreational fishing loss component of the NRDA studies in Aquashicola Creek.

Background

Since 1981 lower Aquashicola Creek was not stocked with trout due to the high level of metals in sediments and water. If lower Aquashicola Creek had not been affected by Site related contaminants, it would have been managed as a regionally significant "high yield" recreational cold water fishery. The contamination and subsequent lack of fish stocking in this section of stream has resulted in a loss of recreational fishing opportunities for the public. This loss of opportunity is a natural resource service loss that was assessed as part of the NRDA process. This process includes quantifying the loss and determining the types and level of restoration needed to compensate for the lost service.

Quantifying the Injury

The management strategy and number of trout that would have been stocked in lower Aquashicola Creek was determined if contamination was absent. Two Pennsylvania trout fishing surveys were used to determine the number of fishing trips for stocked trout that did not occur due to contamination of approximately 2 miles of Aquashicola Creek. Past losses were summed over the



time from when CERCLA was enacted on December 11, 1980 through 2008. Future losses were estimated to continue through 2056, when it is expected that conditions would approach background and trout could again be stocked in lower Aquashicola Creek. Annual losses summed over the entire time period totaled approximately 220,000 lost angler trips.

Damages and Restoration

Damages are the value of the lost service, which can be estimated based on the cost of the restoration required to compensate for the loss, or using other economic approaches. Restoration projects that provide direct or indirect compensation for lost fishing opportunities will be evaluated. For example, increased recreational fishing access would directly restore lost trips over time. Aquatic ecological projects and migratory fish passage projects designed to compensate for ecological injuries would also provide indirect benefits to anglers. A restoration plan will be developed by the Trustees for public comment, which will evaluate the most suitable combination of restoration options to directly compensate for lost fishing trips and other injuries and service losses assessed at the Site.

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